

Military Sealift Fleet Support Command Training Information Bulletin

Able Bodied Seaman Upgrade Program



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Prepared by: MSFSC CIVMARs Workforce Development Division N16

Able Bodied Seaman Upgrade Program Bulletin

Ref: (a) COMSCINST 12410.11L
(b) NMC Policy Letter 14.02

Encl: (1) Application for License and Merchant Mariner's Document (CG-719B, Rev 03/04)
(2) Merchant Marine Personnel Physical Examination Report (CG-719K, Rev 03/04)
(3) Authorization to Release Information MSFSC 12410/54 (2-09)
(4) USCG Image/Photo Scanner Form MLD-FM-REC-201(03)
(5) AB Upgrade and RFPNW/STCW Application Check-Off List MSFSC 12410/53 (2-09)

1. Purpose. Military Sealift Fleet Support Command (MSFSC) has developed the AB Upgrade Program Bulletin to provide the necessary information and guidance to shipboard managers, MSFSC Ordinary Seamen (OS) and their Deck Marine Placement Specialists regarding the Able Bodied Seaman (AB) Upgrade Program. It provides the training requirements, policies and application procedures for participation in the program. The MSFSC AB Upgrade Program offers a career opportunity and promotion path for deserving Ordinary Seamen that are required to complete the AB Upgrade Program within two years, in accordance with the OS Advancement Program (OSAP) Agreement that they signed when they were hired as an OS. The MSFSC has developed this internal "grow our own" AB Upgrade Program to help fill shortages of ABs in the Fleet.

2. Cancellation: MSC Training Information Bulletin 2-03, Able Bodied Seaman Upgrade Program 2003.

3. Background. The MSFSC AB Upgrade Program Coordinator is located in the MSFSC CIVMAR Training Branch (N161) and centrally manages the MSFSC AB Upgrade Program. The Program Coordinator (PC) will:

a. Work closely with the Ordinary Seaman (OS) and their First Officers, and OS Deck Marine Placement Specialists (MPS) and Assistants.

b. Review the applicant's training history, deck sea time, Standards Training Certification Watchkeeping (STCW) 95 certificate with Rating Forming Part of Navigational Watch (RFPNW) endorsements and recommend paths to satisfy any shortfalls.

c. Request and coordinate all required training associated with the upgrade; this may include arranging some or all of the travel items, such as travel orders, travel advance, rental car/shuttles, lodging, directions and delivery of travel orders and air line tickets or itineraries.

d. Maintain a file for each applicant and assist OSs with processing, submitting and tracking their United States Coast Guard (USCG) AB Upgrade applications for their new AB (Spec-Unlimited) Merchant Mariner Document (MMD) and AB STCW 95 certificate with RFPNW endorsements.

e. Obtain the MSFSC sea service letters prior to 14 March 2007 and MSFSC Drug Free Letters and include them in the OS's AB Upgrade application package.

f. Review the application for completeness and accuracy, and then forward it to the USCG Regional Exam Center (REC) selected by the OS via certified mail or FedEx.

4. RFPNW Program. The MSFSC AB Upgrade PC is additionally assigned as the MSFSC CIVMAR Training Branch's STCW/RFPNW Program Coordinator to obtain and include the MSFSC RFPNW Program Certificates and USCG STCW 95 Certificates with RFPNW endorsements in the AB Upgrade application package.

5. Entry into the Program. Participants in the AB Upgrade Program must:

a. Receive a satisfactory or better evaluation or recommendation by their Marine Placement Specialists or shipboard supervisors (Master/CHMATE).

b. Prior to attending able seaman (AB) and lifeboatman (LB) training participants must have completed their RFPNW Work & Record Book and received either the MSFSC RFPNW Program Certificate or the USCG STCW 95 certificate with the RFPNW endorsements, without any restrictions, and have 8 months documented deck sea time prior to starting courses.

c. In cases where the participant is very close to completing the MSFSC RFPNW Work and Record Book assessments and 120 watch endorsement requirements, the AB Upgrade PC may make an exception for scheduling purposes and allow the mariner to attend the AB Upgrade training courses before they have obtained the MSFSC RFPNW Program Certificate or USCG STCW Certificate with RFPNW endorsements. *However, in such cases, the Ordinary Seaman must submit in writing an explanation to the training specialist the circumstances that precluded the employee from obtaining the RFPNW Program Certificate or STCW RFPNW endorsements were delayed beyond the control of the employee.

Note: The purpose of requiring Ordinary Seaman to obtain the MSFSC RFPNW Program Certificate or USCG STCW RFPNW endorsements beforehand, helps ensure that the Command has a pool of certified OSs. These seamen may be used to fill positions that need not be AB, but require USCG STCW RFPNW endorsements for watch standing. These positions are found on some USCG Certificates of Inspection where they are generally referred to as "Specially Trained Ordinary Seaman."

6. Required Sea Service: Applicants need 360 days minimum deck sea service to be considered for an upgraded AB (Special) MMD, 540 days minimum for AB (Limited) MMD or 1080 days minimum for AB (Unlimited) MMD. The required deck sea service (minimum of 360 creditable days) can be a combination of MSC deck sea service, or other USCG approved deck sea service from the U.S. Navy, other military services, U.S. government agencies, and from shipping companies in the private industries. Only the deck ratings will earn creditable deck sea time to use towards the requirements for an AB endorsement. The military DD-214 form or other service record pages are not sufficient evidence of sea service. Mariners must produce the "Transcription of Sea Service" form validating any military experience while attached to ships.

a. Mariners approved to attend the AB and LB training shall have earned a minimum of eight (8) months creditable deck sea service and be in a position to attain the balance of four (4)

months or more deck sea service within one-year of course completion, since the Able Seaman Course Certificate and Lifeboat/PSC Course Certificate both expire within one year.

b. If both AB and LB course certificates are about to expire, the OS can apply to the USCG REC to be issued an AB (OSV) MMD, a Lifeboat/PSC Course endorsed on the STCW document, with OS RFPNW or restricted RFPNW (Lookout only) endorsements, until OS obtains 360 days deck sea time and completes the RFPNW Work and Record Book. Once the OS obtains the 360 days deck sea time, they can reapply for another upgraded AB (Special) MMD and AB STCW Certificate with the RFPNW endorsements.

c. An OS is not eligible for a permanent promotion consideration to the position of AB until they have obtained a USCG AB (Special to Unlimited) MMD and their AB RFPNW/STCW endorsements.

Note: The OS is responsible for obtaining and submitting the certified letters or documentation for prior USCG approved deck sea service experiences and obtaining MSC Master's sea service letters dated after 14 March 2007. Some MSFSC vessels in port (i.e. USNS Mercy and USNS Comfort) are considered low-operating tempo by the USCG and the USCG will only credit deck sea service at the rate of 60%, unless these ships go to sea.

7. Required training: All AB Upgrade Program associated training requests must be submitted by the OS's Deck Marine Placement Specialist while assigned to the CIVMAR Support Unit Pool and from their Chief Mate or Master onboard their assigned ship. The training will be coordinated through the MSFSC CIVMAR Training Branch's AB Upgrade PC. The successful applicant must complete the following USCG approved courses

- a. Able Seaman Course Certificate (Exp. One-year from date of issue)
- b. STCW Lifeboat/PSC Course Certificate (Exp. One-year from date of issue)
- c. RFPNW Course Certificate
- d. Four STCW Basic Safety Training (BST) courses (Exp. Five-years)
 - (1) Basic Fire Fighting
 - (2) Personal Survival
 - (3) Elementary First Aid
 - (4) Personal Safety & Social Responsibility

The OS must submit their AB Upgrade application package including all the required certificates, USCG fee and other required documents to the AB Upgrade PC, prior to the documents expiration periods. This will allow the PC enough time to submit the completed application to the OS's selected USCG Regional Examination Center (REC).

Note: The MSFSC RFPNW one-day course is a requirement and most OSs will attend it during their New Hire Training phase. The course is required to obtain their MSFSC RFPNW Program Certificate and USCG STCW Certificate with RFPNW endorsements. By completing the course

the OS will only need to stand 120 watches (480 hours of watch standing), vice 360 watches (1440 hours of watch standing), which must be documented in their MSFSC RFPNW Work and Record Book along with their completed RFPNW assessments. Refer to the current revision of the MSFSC RFPNW and Record Book for guidance or contact the AB Upgrade PC.

8. Training Sources. Normally, the Able Seaman/RFPNW and Lifeboat/PSC courses will be scheduled primarily at the MSFSC Training Center West, San Diego. Other scheduled alternate training sites may be at the MSFSC Training Center East Detachment training sites in Norfolk, VA; Little Creek, VA Baltimore, MD, and San Diego areas, depending upon training ship availability. All MSFSC courses are USCG approved “in-lieu” courses and includes the USCG approved completion certificates, so the OS will not have to test at the USCG REC. When MSFSC courses are unavailable when the ship or Deck MPS needs them, alternate USCG approved schools will be scheduled by the AB Upgrade PC based upon availability and funding.

Note: Special Group AB Upgrade training requests can be facilitated upon request. Off-site (remote) AB Upgrade Training, such as, i.e. in Guam, shipboard; should be originated and requested, at least 90 days in advance with the MSFSC Director of the CIVMAR Workforce Development Division (N16) to allow time to coordinate the Instructors, event planning, logistics, funding, lifeboat(s) and contracting. Once off-site Group Training is approved and set up, one or more ships can submit their final training requests to the AB Upgrade PC to obtain confirmed training quotas, travel orders, lodging and other logistical support.

9. Application process. The application process for upgrading credentials to receive a USCG AB MMD and STCW 95 Certificate with RFPNW Endorsements:

a. The AB Upgrade application package must be mailed to the AB Upgrade PC and include all of the items listed below, with enclosure (5). The AB Upgrade applicant must complete all of the USCG requirements for review and submission to the OS’s selected USCG REC. Once the package is determined to be complete, the AB Upgrade PC will forward it to the USCG REC via certified mail or FedEx:

- USCG Application (CG 719b, Rev 03/04)
- USCG Physical Exam Report (CG 719K, Rev 03/04)
- MSFSC Release of Information Authorization Letter
- Deck sea service letter(s) (minimum of 360 creditable deck days)
- MSFSC Drug Free Workplace Letter
- Copy of MMD (back and front)
- Copy of passport picture page
- Two (2) passport pictures
- USCG Scanner Image Form
- AB course certificate
- LB course certificate
- STCW BST Basic Firefighting course certificate
- STCW BST Personal Safety and Social Responsibilities course certificate
- STCW BST Personal Survival Course Certificate
- STCW BST Elementary First Aid Course Certificate
- RFPNW course certificate

- MSFSC RFPNW Program certificate
- Check or money order payable to USCG for \$140.00; or receipt from online payment

Note: Submit original sea service letters, documents, and training certificates, along with certified copies of MMDs and Passport Books. The USCG fee can be paid online at <http://www.pay.gov> , submit a copy of the online receipt for payment with the application package.

b. Mariners are allowed to request reimbursement from the CIVMAR Training Branch, for the new USCG AB Upgrade credential fees by submitting an SF-1164 Form and USCG fee receipts in accordance with the specific guidance in the MSFSC Instruction 7200.1A, or the most current revised version. The current instruction is posted on the MSC Website under CIVMAR Training tabs at www.msc.navy.mil and you can obtain the SF-1164 Form from your Purser or CIVMAR Support Unit.

10. Receipt of credentials and permanent promotion consideration:

a. Applicants are responsible for all associated travel costs to/from the issuing REC. Fingerprinting must be completed in person at the REC as they use a digital system; submission through the mail is no longer an option. Fingerprints must be received in the office before applications can be processed or issued at the National Maritime Center (NMC). The mariner is responsible for immediately sending copies of the front/backside of the new AB MMD and AB STCW RFPNW endorsements to the AB Upgrade PC and their OS Deck Placement Specialist at the MSFSC to initiate the promotion process.

b. All CIVMARS with the required AB MMD endorsement and RFPNW-AB STCW certificate are required to submit copies of their new credentials to the AB Upgrade PC and their Marine Placement Specialist. Once received, the AB Upgrade PC will generate and route the paperwork through the CIVMAR Placement Division N15. Once signed by N15, the AB Upgrade PC will submit the promotion paperwork to the MSFSC Employment Department's Deck Employment Branch Office N141. Once the administrative review conducted by N141 has concluded, the mariner will be notified of a failure or successful completion including their permanent promotion (to the position of AB) effective date for pay purposes.

11. Additional information on the USCG requirements: Should you need additional information regarding the USCG application requirements, please check with the local USCG Regional Examination Center located on the USCG website: www.uscg.mil/stcw

12. Point of Contact. MSFSC point of contact for AB Upgrade/RFPNW training is Ms. Naomi Sak; Naomi.sak@navy.mil, 757-443-2809. Please send AB Upgrade and RFPNW Work and Record Book applications to the below address:

First Class/FedEX Mailing address:

Military Sealift Fleet Support Command
Bldg. SP-64, Norfolk Naval Base
471 East C. Street
Norfolk, VA 23511-2419
Attn: Naomi Sak (N16)